NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

FENCE

(Ft.)

CODE 382

DEFINITION

A constructed barrier to animals or people.

PURPOSE

This practice is applied to facilitate the application of conservation practices by providing a means to control movement of animals and people.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice may be applied on any area where management of animal or people movement is needed. Fences are not needed where natural barriers will serve the purpose.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Fencing materials, type and design of fence installed shall be of a high quality and durability. The type and design of fence installed will meet the management objectives and the physical challenges of the site including topography and soil properties. The identified NRCS life expectancy for this practice is 25 years.

Fences shall be positioned to facilitate management requirements. The fence design and installation shall follow all federal, State and local laws and regulations.

All planned fences require consultation with Wyoming Game and Fish Department to identify potential wildlife conflicts prior to construction.

After the fence has been installed, a site inspection will be made to determine if fence construction, and materials used, meets practice standard and specification requirements.

CONSIDERATIONS

The fence design and location should consider: location and adequacy of water facilities, development of potential grazing systems, human access, landscape aesthetics, erosion problems, moisture conditions, flooding potential, and stream crossings.

For certain fence types, like Power Fence, cleared rights-of-way may be appropriate to facilitate fence construction and maintenance

Fences across gullies, canyons, or streams may require special bracing, designs or approaches.

Fence design and location should consider ease of access for construction, repair and maintenance.

Additional Considerations For Plants:

Where applicable, consider the use of snow fence to accumulate moisture and retard wind desiccation for new plantings, especially windbreaks. Snow fence designs have not proven successful for control of livestock or big game. When both of these objectives need to be met, a snow fence should be combined with another fence designed for that purpose. Separate rangeland from introduced or domesticated perennial or annual pastures to control selectivity by grazing animals.

Equalize pasture size to facilitate “Prescribed Grazing”.

Improve livestock distribution and grazing management of plants by locating fence(s) on ecological site, or distinctive soil, boundaries.

Limit access to livestock watering sites to improve grazing distribution and utilization of plants.

Additional Considerations For Livestock:

Reduce livestock deaths resulting from lightning by installing circuit breakers or grounding all wires at 100 to 200 feet intervals. Grounding can be accomplished by using steel posts or strapping pipe alongside the wooden posts. Fence wires should be securely fastened for grounding to the posts or pipes with galvanized wire ties.

Enclose stock water ponds with fence and provide offsite water to improve water quality for livestock. However, minimize wildlife (i.e. bird and bat) collisions with wire by leaving a 100' buffer between the fence and water edge.

Facilitate handling and feeding by considering availability to work pens, winter shelter, roads and trails.

Control livestock access to known poisonous plant area, especially during the time of year when the plant is most dangerous to livestock health.

Additional Considerations For Wildlife:

If, through consultation with Wyoming Game and Fish Department, adverse wildlife impacts are identified, consider avoidance, minimization, or mitigation.

Where deer, elk, or moose are the primary concern, fences should not be more than 42 inches high.

Where deer are of concern, 12 inches of space between the top and second wire will help prevent animals from hooking their back legs between the wires when they jump over the fence.

Pronghorn generally pass under fences and seldom jump over. A smooth bottom wire of 16 inches or greater above the ground will facilitate their passage. If a lower wire is needed then the top wire should not be higher than 32 inches. Appropriate openings can be installed across known pronghorn trails to facilitate safe crossings.

Leave gates open when the managed area is not is use.

Flagging the top wire of a new fence between posts will help give wildlife a height reference. They tend to become accustomed to the height, by the time flagging deteriorates.

Control livestock access to important wildlife habitat areas.

Where a water trough is bisected by a fence, minimize wildlife and wire collisions by using a board or other visible material to connect fence line instead of wire.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Fence construction shall be in accordance with Wyoming NRCS Conservation Practice Standard and Specifications

Plans at a minimum will include:
- Map with fence location and field numbers
- Length of fence and how determined
- Type of fence, including detailed construction specifications
- Date and signature
- Date practice applied

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Regular inspection of fences should be part of an ongoing maintenance program. Inspection of fences after storm events is necessary to insure the continued proper function of the fence. Maintenance and repairs will be performed in a timely manner as needed.

Retain and properly discard all broken fencing material and hardware. All necessary precautions should be taken to ensure the safety of construction and maintenance crews.

Fence maintenance items to be alert to and corrected should include:

- Tension of wire
- Broken wires
- Wire corrosion
- Pulled staples or clips
- Bent steel posts
- Broken stays
- Post alignment
- Post stability
- Sagging gates
- Broken posts

REFERENCES

United States Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management and United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service. 1988. **Fences**. Missoula Technology and Development Center, Missoula, MT.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 2005. **Fencing Guidelines for Wildlife**. Habitat Extension Bulletin No. 53. Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Cheyenne, WY.